

Merry Christmas Mike Wheeler by kittenCorrosion

Series: [Stranger Teens \[5\]](#)

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Christmas, Cookies, F/M, Fluff, Giftgiving, a lil bit of of naughtyness at the end, but if you don't like makeouts don't read, don't mess with el when she's baking, general cuteness, guess who headcanons that the wheelers are part irish, i'm not even irish but i like the idea, it's cute though i promise, mike is such a lil buttface haha, they're teenagers again

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Summary:

El is trying make cookies for Karen but Mike keeps getting in the way. It's a bit annoying but she decides it's okay when he gives her his gift and they realize just how much they think alike.

Merry Christmas Mike Wheeler

Author's Note:

merry christmas! and happy holidays!

i wrote most of this after having two and half glasses of wine, so pardon anything that seems a bit off, i didn't have it edited because it's just supposed to be a little christmas gift to everyone who reads my stories and also i didn't want to bother my editor on christmas.

also this takes place after You Make My Dreams Come True, so if you're currently reading that, the reason they're so comfortable with things is because that whole... situation... has passed. consider it a preview if you'd like. C;

i hope you all have had wonderful holidays. <3

December 24, 1988

The heat from the oven was warm on her face as El cracked open the door and peeked in. She had been baking cookies for a minimum of two hours now, by herself, and she was proud to see that the little balls of dough were softening just as they should be. Closing the door she whirled around to head back to the counter to start chopping pecans.

“Oof!”

Mike grunted as she rammed into him, full speed, her elbow hitting him right in the ribs. She bounced off of him and slid, her socks slick on the linoleum, barely catching herself before she fell over. He was holding his rib and wincing and as annoyed as she was with him, she paused, suddenly concerned. Walking to him she reached a hand out.

“Why were you in my way again?” Her voice was harsh but her face

was worried.

It had been like this since she had tied her apron on and grabbed her mixing bowl, Mike constantly standing behind her, stealing bits of dough or teasingly holding the whisk out of her reach until she was forced to rip it out of his hands with her mind. He looked at her now, having the decency to look ashamed, and smiled weakly.

"I just... sorry, El." He didn't have an excuse and they both knew it.

Assured that he was alright she huffed, pushing him out of the kitchen towards the dining room, tired of his shenanigans. She'd promised Karen weeks ago that she would bake cookies for Christmas, eager to show off her newest skill. It had taken several months of practice, but she perfected her russian tea cookies, thumbprints, and red velvet butter cookies, digging out recipes from Joyce's untouched cookbooks and baking until the Byers house was so full of cookies that Hop had banned her from the kitchen for a week. It was her present to Karen this year, something she wanted to do help relieve some stress, and here was Mike, in the middle of it, making a mess.

He sheepishly let himself be removed from the kitchen, but stood in the doorway, leaning against the wall and sighing. It's not like he had tried to knock over the bowl of powdered sugar meant for rolling cookies, or spill pecans on the floor. And the red dye trick was supposed to be funny, he didn't think she'd actually believe he'd cut himself and was bleeding everywhere. His ear still kind of hurt from when she'd screamed. Okay, that one had been a bad idea.

"Stay out, Mike." Her arms were crossed and she was scowling fiercely. "I love you, but you're being dumb."

The declaration of love softened her words. She was irritated that he was distracting her and that she had accidentally hurt him, but she knew it was only because he wanted to spend time with her. Turning around, she headed back for the counter, grabbing a cutting board off the rack.

"Sorry, El. Can..." He shifted, switching to leaning on the door frame, trying to keep even his toes out of the kitchen. "Can I just stand here?"

Is that okay?"

She was chopping pecans now, but she turned to look at him, eyebrow raised, holding up the knife that looked wickedly sharp. He gulped, but she just sighed and rolled her eyes.

"I guess." She turned back, chopping frantically, the pecans being nudged under the blade by an invisible force instead of her fingers. "I don't know why you want to."

"I like watching you." The words slipped out of his mouth before he thought about it and he flushed. That was a thought he preferred to stay a thought.

She paused again, turning around to look at him and give him one of her scathing "are you kidding me?" looks. But then her face softened and she set the knife down and walked back over to the doorway, standing on her toes to kiss his nose affectionately. Before her lips made it, he moved his face, meeting her with his mouth, kissing her more deeply than she planned. She almost pulled back, but his hands reached down, pulling her to him and she relaxed, stifling a giggle at his antics and resting her hands on his chest. She ended the kiss and looked at him, feeling a little less annoyed. He came in for another kiss but she dodged, squeezing out of his grip and scooting backwards into the kitchen before he could grab her again.

"Aw, come on, El, can't you take a little break?" They were both smiling but she shook her head firmly.

"I have to finish this batch and start baking the tea cookies." She looked distractedly towards the fridge, wondering if her dough was done chilling.

"I'll give you your present."

That got her attention. He'd been mute on the subject, not giving her hints or even admitting if he got her something. It had been driving her a little nuts, especially since she'd spent so much time making sure his gift was perfect. She stared at his face, trying to figure out if he was serious or not, but he was doing the thing where he tried to make himself look as innocent as possible, which mostly just made

him look constipated, and she snorted out a laugh.

“I don’t believe you.” He was now trying to look hurt and she laughed harder. Biting his lip, he thought for a moment before lighting up, grinning at her.

“I’m serious! Here, I’ll go get it.”

He vanished and she could hear him thumping up the stairs, the door to his room opening. The timer on the counter went off and she jumped, whirling around and running for the oven, carefully pulling the cookies out and setting them on a potholder, fanning them with another potholder and shutting the oven door behind her with her mind. For the most part she didn’t use powers that often, only in emergencies or when she knew there was no one around, but when she baked or cooked it was like a third arm, closing cabinets and getting things down that were out of reach. There were footsteps on the stairs again and he reappeared in the doorway, clutching something small in his hand. Curious, she finished sliding the next sheet of cookies in the oven and headed over to him, eyes bright. He looked smug, having finally tempted her away.

“Let me see.” Her hands reached out eagerly and he took a step back, smiling.

“You don’t have to hold it to see it.”

Keeping out of reach, he opened his hands, showing her a crudely wrapped, tiny box, no bigger than his palm. It had a stupidly large bow stuck on it, but the whole thing looked a little crushed, like it had been crammed into a hiding place for too long.

“What is it?” She asked, following him out of the kitchen and into the dining room.

Mike rolled his eyes. “I’m not going to tell you. You have to wait and see.”

She frowned at him, reaching out again, more tentatively this time, but still curious.

“Wait for what?”

“For when you take a break.”

He hadn't planned on giving it to her early, fully intending to wait for Christmas day, but since she was here now and he wasn't sure how busy she'd be tomorrow, he figured it wouldn't hurt to do it early. And honestly he just wanted to spend some time with her that didn't include burning his fingers on the oven or spilling powdered sugar on the floor. They hadn't hung out in a few days, busy with their own families, but it was almost Christmas and it was getting kind of late and he wanted to be with her a bit before she went home. Screw the cookies.

She sighed heavily, now torn between her kitchen duty and wanting to open the mystery present he held in his hands. Before she could speak Mike interrupted her.

“Is something burning?”

The fire alarm went off and El gasped, turning back to the oven, which was leaking black smoke. They both ran for it at the same time, jamming in the doorway before El squeezed herself out and skidded across the kitchen, opening the oven and trying to find a potholder. There wasn't one within reach and she muttered “damn it” before just pulling it out with her mind and dumping the charred lumps into the sink. Mike stood behind her, keeping out of the way, waving his arms around and trying to disperse the smoke, cringing at the shrill sound that shrieked through the house.

“Is everything alright?!”

Karen appeared in the doorway, still holding the tape she'd been using to wrap presents. No one answered, obviously everything was not alright, and she quickly rushed over to El and helped her fan out the oven. Soon enough the alarm stopped screaming and the three relaxed, leaning against the counter.

“Sorry.” El peeped, looking ashamed.

Karen sighed and waved off the apology, not upset, she'd burned plenty of cookies in her own time, there was no reason to cry over these ones. She looked at the counter, where several dozen butter

cookies were cooling.

“You made all of these? In...” She glanced at the clock, “two and a half hours?”

El nodded, her face still flushed from embarrassment. Mike was trying to slip from the kitchen, unnoticed, but she whipped her head to glare at him and he froze. She turned back to Karen, nodding.

“Yes.” She picked up the batch of dough that still needed to be baked. “I have these to bake and then another recipe...”

“El, honey, this is more than enough. I thought you were just making a few dozen chocolate chip...” Her eyes widened as she looked around at the racks and varieties that filled her kitchen.

El blushed again, suddenly pleased.

“Oh. I thought... this is enough?”

“Plenty! I can make some plates up and take them to the neighbors. In fact, let me finish baking these. You deserve a break.”

At that word Mike perked up, still on the edge of the kitchen. El wasn't so easily dissuaded from her task.

“But I need to roll them in pecans...”

“Oh that's easy, I can do that. Please, sweetie, go sit down for a bit.”

Karen was visibly excited by the amount of food that surrounded her, that she hadn't been forced to make. She gave El a motherly pat and then started to lead her out of the kitchen.

“Let me finish, okay, sweetie? You've done plenty, it really helps me out.” Karen had led her to the couch and somehow managed to make her sit down and then disappeared back into the kitchen.

Holly was watching A Christmas Story, laying in front of the TV with her chin in her hands, transfixed, and Ted was snoring in the La-Z-Boy. El sat, a bit stunned at her sudden eviction from the kitchen. Mike plopped down next to her, trying to be apologetic but actually

kind of excited that she was no longer too busy. He leaned over and wrapped his arm around her, pulling her into his side and grinning. She snuggled in, deciding that fighting Karen wouldn't be worth it, and besides, her shoulders were aching a bit from beating so much butter and sugar together. Letting out a tired breath she relaxed into her boyfriend's side and dropped her head onto his shoulder, letting him lace their fingers together. It was peaceful for that moment, the TV spewing carols merrily, the glow from the Christmas tree lighting up the room.

"Mike!" El shot up, remembering the present, and looked at him excitedly. "Present?"

It was like this every year, she wasn't necessarily selfish, but the idea that people would buy her things, just for her, never stopped being excited and any time she knew she had presents she would almost bounce up and down and beg to know what it was. It was a bit of her lost childhood, and Mike thought it was adorable. He smiled knowingly and pulled the small present back out of his pocket. She jumped up and threw herself at it, trying to grab it from him, contorting her body and crawling across him as he laughed and held his long arms away from her.

"Shhh!" Holly glowered at them from her place in front of the screen.

They froze, El still sprawled across his lap, her arm stretched out, Mike leaning back away, his arm held high above her head. Holly glared a second longer and then turned back to the TV. El met his eyes and they both snickered, but she crawled off of him.

"Wanna go to my room?" Mike asked her, quietly.

She nodded and he stood, keeping the present behind his back where she couldn't snatch it from him. Grabbing her bag off the floor, she followed him up the stairs, shutting the door behind her and locking it silently. She whipped around, eyes predatory, and then pounced. He wasn't expecting it and grunted as she threw herself on top of him, pressing a kiss to his lips that he met and returned. His hands came up to rest on her waist and he was surprised to feel her fidgeting with his pants, not displeased but not expecting her to be so eager. She kissed him harder and pressed herself against him and he

felt himself shudder, relaxing. Then he felt her hand slip in his pocket and she leapt off of him, triumphantly holding up the small package that he'd been trying to hide.

“Ha!”

A grin stretched across her face and he stared at her, bewildered and little disappointed that she had only been kissing him to get what she wanted.

“That... that’s not fair! You can’t do that!”

She didn’t answer, too transfixed on the tiny box in her hands. Glancing at him, she smiled again, still pleased with her victory, but paused to walk over to her bag and pull out a similarly small wrapped box, tossing it to him. It bounced off his chest, he couldn’t catch anything to save his life, and he scrambled to grab it before it fell of the bed.

“I got you something too. Can I open this now?”

He nodded, staring down at the present he held in his hand, and glanced up at the sound of tearing paper, wanting to see her reaction. The wrapping paper fell to the floor and she opened the little box, gasping as she caught the glimmer of silver. Her fingers almost shook as she pulled the small ring out, holding it up into the light, her eyes bright and shining with wonder.

Mike set his present down on the bed, standing and going to her, smiling affectionately. He gently took it from her and grabbed her hand, sliding it onto her middle finger on her right hand. It was silver band, with thin, intricate strips interweaving until it came to the middle, where two hands were carved, holding a heart that was topped with a small crown. It was subtle but beautiful and El twisted her hand, blinking and staring. She looked up at Mike, face glowing gratefully.

“Pretty.” Her voice was hushed but she was smiling.

“It’s a claddagh ring.” He explained, taking her hand in his to show her. “The hands represent friendship,” he glanced at her but she was

entranced, “the heart is love,” at that she looked up at him and smiled softly, “and the crown is loyalty.”

“Loyalty?” She asked, confused.

It had been long enough that she understood most words, but every now and then there would be one she didn’t quite know the meaning of. He swallowed and tried to think of a good explanation.

“It’s like... being loyal to someone means choosing to only be with them, not anyone else. It’s kind of like... a promise.”

Her eyes lit up. She knew that word, and she pulled him down and kissed his cheek in thanks before turning her gaze back to the ring on her finger. He wasn’t done yet.

“Um, see, when you turn the heart inward,” he pointed at bottom of the heart, which was facing her, “like this, it means that you’re... with someone. If you point it out it means you’re searching.”

He felt a little dumb, thinking maybe the whole idea was stupid, even though she seemed to like it well enough. It had taken him months to think of something, only finding out about this one from his mom. El was still gazing at the ring, rubbing her finger over the heart.

“If you, um, don’t like it it’s okay, I can take it back, I just thought... my dad got one for my mom when they were dating so, um, I... I thought you might like it...” He trailed off, a bit nervous.

She looked up at him, frowning and shaking her head, not believing he would think she didn’t absolutely love it. Pulling her hand away protectively she shook her head at him again.

“I love it, Mike.” Her voice softened. “It’s perfect.”

He let out a breath, relieved that she really, truly loved it, and then let himself smile, pleased. Suddenly she glanced up, looking around the room, spying his present from her lying on the bed and pouncing on it, smiling excitedly and holding it out to him. He took it from her gently, not surprised she got him something, she always did, but not really believing he was worth the effort.

“You didn’t have to-”

“Shut up and open it.”

She was used to his disbelief and rolled her eyes, pushing the gift further into his hands. He started unwrapping and she tugged at a strand of honey-brown hair, feeling a bit nervous. It had taken two months and the help of both Dustin and Mr. Clarke to get the present made, not to mention a generous amount of her library wages. It would be worth it all if he liked it.

Carefully ripping the wrapping paper off, he found a small box, almost as small as the one her ring had come in, and gently the pulled the lid off, blinking at what was inside. It was a silver keychain, the ring attached to a rectangle that was smooth except for something engraved on the front. He squinted and picked it up, rubbing his thumb over the engraving, before glancing up at her eager face.

“Is... are these sound waves?”

She nodded, unable to keep the grin from stretching across her face.

“Mr. Clarke helped. And Dustin. They had me speak into the radio-thingy and it made like a... a graph. It looked like that.” She didn’t understand the science of it, or even know what any of the equipment was called, but she knew he would and that he would hopefully appreciate it. He stared at it, voice a bit hoarse when he spoke.

“What does it say?”

El was suddenly shy, looking down at her hand and spinning the ring around her finger self-consciously. He poked her side playfully, an unspoken threat that he would tickle the answer out of her if necessary and she squeaked and pushed his hand away smiling, but still shaking her head, not ready to answer him yet. His other hand came around and he pulled her to him, hands frantically tickling her and she screeched, trying to shy away from him as he followed her across the room, pinning her down on the bed and mercilessly reaching his hand under her Christmas sweater to tickle her even

harder. They were both laughing, and El finally gasped, tears in her eyes.

“Stop! Mike, stop! I’ll tell you!”

He paused, eyebrows raised, not quite believing her, hands still in position to tickle her more. She was still giggling, trying to sit up a bit but not able to move since he was on top of her. Wiggling a bit she got her hands loose, reaching down to pick up the keychain he had looped on his thumb, bringing it up to where he could see it and her mouth as she spoke.

“Promise.”

He was stunned and looked down at her, speechless. Her hair billowed out around her head, giving her a halo, and she was smiling nervously, afraid he’d think her idea was dumb. As the silence stretched, she bit her lip, eyes dimming, glancing away from his face, her entire body slumping.

“You don’t like it.”

“No.”

She dared to look up at him, still crestfallen, and he shook his head, not able to find a single word, but trying, for her sake.

“I... It’s...” he echoed her words, “It’s perfect.”

Her face lit up, brighter than any Christmas tree, and instead of trying to explain further he bent down and kissed her, feeling her relax beneath him and surrender to his kiss, arms coming up to wrap around his neck and pull him down further. Her legs were wrapped around his waist and he let himself collapse on top of her a bit, pressing their bodies together, the room suddenly getting much, much warmer. It wasn’t long before they were both half-undressed, pressed together and breathing heavily, wrapped in each other’s arms. Mike glanced towards his desk, wondering how far she wanted to go, but was interrupted by her soft voice.

“You like your present?” Her face was flushed, hair now tangled around her face, and she was panting a bit.

He tried not to laugh at the question.

“I mean, I thought I made it pretty clear...” There was purplish red spot forming on his collarbone where she’d been a little overzealous, but he was grinning, equally flushed. “But I can keep explaining... if you want.”

He smiled mischievously and bent down to kiss her again.

“Mike! El!” Karen’s voice carried from downstairs.

They jumped apart, ending up on opposite sides of the bed, staring at each other with equally frustrated expressions. There were footsteps coming up the stairs and they split, Mike quickly zipping up his pants, El grabbing her sweater from where it dangled off the bed and pulling it back on, trying to fix her hair. His shirt was on and they somehow managed to be fully dressed just as the first knock sounded from the door. They were both off the bed, and Mike ran to the door, unlocking it quickly and opening it, casually leaning in the doorway.

“H-Hey, mom.”

Karen took one look at him, face flushed, hair disheveled, polo crooked and unbuttoned enough to show off his new hickey, and sighed. El appeared behind him, managing to look more put together, though her hair was definitely still mussed, smiling innocently.

“I just came up to let you know that we’re all unwrapping a present, if you want to come down and join us.”

“We did that.”

El was excited, almost singing the words. She held up her hand proudly, displaying her ring, and Mike cringed, feeling embarrassed. He’d thought of the idea because of his mom, but he hadn’t exactly told her what he’d bought for El, and as she spotted the familiar symbols her eyes lit up. El was too excited to care, opening the door and squeezing out to show the older women.

“It’s a clawdog ring!” She said excitedly.

“Claddagh.”

Karen corrected her gently, taking the girl's hand in her own and examining the silver band, glancing at her son appreciatively. So he did listen to her stories. She held up her hand, showing her wedding band and engagement ring, which happened to be the same style ring, though much grander, the band made of solid gold, the heart a diamond instead of just metal. Ted was half-Irish, half-English, and he'd explained the importance of the claddagh, the knowledge passed down from his mother. She herself wasn't Irish, but she'd fallen in love with the tradition, and after giving her the smaller claddagh ring a few months after they'd started dating, he'd replaced it with the one she currently had when he'd proposed. It touched her heart that Mike had chosen to do the same thing, and she found herself pulling El into an excited hug, giving her son an excited and proud look as he watched. He flushed again and shrugged, looking away. She let El go, smiling.

"It's beautiful, sweetie." She gave the ring a final look, lost in her own nostalgia.

The two teenagers glanced at each other, both relieved that she seemed too happy to get them in trouble for what they'd been doing. Mike cleared his throat, breaking his mom out of her thoughts.

"You said, um, presents? The Christmas Eve tradition thing?"

It was a tradition, they always opened one present the day before to help keep the anticipation from being too much and also because it was fun. Karen nodded.

"Did you want to come down? There's something under the tree for you too, El."

El perked up at that, eyes brightening at the thought of presents, and she looked back at Mike, who was a bit more reluctant, preferring to stay up in his room and finish what they had started. But her eyes were dancing and her face was pleading and he gave in, deciding that her excitement would be worth it. He just wanted one more second alone with her.

"We'll be down in a minute, okay mom?" Now his eyes were pleading and she rolled hers.

“Fine, fine. Nancy isn’t back yet from the Harrington’s, anyways.” She gave him a pointed look. “But be down in five minutes because she’s on her way.”

With that she turned and left, heading back downstairs to the living room to wake up Ted, who was napping in his chair as usual. As soon as she was gone, Mike grabbed El’s hand and spun her around, pulling him to her for a final kiss, which she gladly accepted, face shining.

“Thank you for the... the promise.” She said, voice soft, eyes wide and grateful.

He ran his hand across the ring on her finger, still happy she loved the gift he’d spent so long trying to pick out. It had taken him an embarrassingly long time to persuade the jeweler to find something that was more affordable for his RadioShack wages, and the second he’d laid eyes on it he had remembered his mom telling him about the one that circled her finger, the lore behind it, and it had just spoken El’s name. He’d felt a little ridiculous after he’d bought it, second guessing that it was too serious, too childish, too... plain for her. But it just looked so right on her finger, and he was relieved that it fit so well.

“I love mine too.” He pulled the keychain from his pocket.

It was so thoughtful, and he tried to remember to thank Dustin and Mr. Clarke next time he saw them, for helping her when she was clearly in unfamiliar, science-y territory. It was more precious than she could have imagined. He loved the idea of getting to carry her voice in his pocket, the special word that they’d whispered long ago. She’d become more vocal the past few years, but he still treasured each word she spoke, knowing that sometimes it was still hard. He rubbed his finger over the engraved sound waves again, before glancing at her. Her face was still lit up, and he reached out to smooth down her hair, still a bit messy from the short makeout. It had been bad timing, his mom’s summons, but he reminded himself that it was still Christmas break and now that the actual Christmas celebrations were happening tomorrow, they would have plenty of time to... hang out.

The front door opened and they heard Nancy's voice, calling a greeting. It was their signal to head downstairs, and El stood up taller to steal another kiss before dancing backwards, her hand still holding his, and pulling him out of his room and towards downstairs, excited and giggling playfully. He let himself be pulled, but stopped her when she reached the top of stairs, pulling her in for one more kiss. As they pulled apart he smiled, heart fuzzy.

"Merry Christmas, El."

"Merry Christmas, Mike."

Author's Note:

it's just some good ol' christmas fluff. have some random ted/karen fluff too, i don't even know where that came from but it happened haha.

if you're wondering what a claddagh ring, i highly recommend you google it, it's a very sweet concept. i actually own from a past relationship and it still makes me quite happy even if that whole thing didn't work out. mike and el will fair far better i'm sure. C;

keep your eyes out for a new chapter tomorrow, and i hope you all have a lovely new year.